

Message Text

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41

ACTION SCSE-00

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 SCA-01 L-03 H-02 DODE-00

PM-04 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00 /028 W

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O 031903Z MAR 76 ZFF-4

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3373

UNCLAS MEXICO 2814

E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC, MX

SUBJECT: NAVAL AIRCRAFT CRASH, CHIHUAHUA, MEXICO

REF: LUERS/CALDERHEAD TELECON, MARCH 2

1. EMBASSY DEFENSE ATTACHE LEARNED THROUGH CALL FROM US CONGEN, CIUDAD JUAREZ AT 4:45 P.M. THAT A US NAVAL PLANE AFTER TAKING OFF FROM EL PASO HAD CRASHED IN MEXICO AT 4:40 P.M. CLOSE TO MEXICAN/US BORDER, SOMEWHERE WEST OF CIUDAD JUAREZ. AT 5:10 P.M., AFTER OBTAINING TAIL NUMBER AND BASIC PLANE DATA, EMBASSY REQUESTED GOM CLEARANCE TO CARRY OUT URGENT SEARCH AND RESCUE MISSION. PERMISSION GRANTED AT 6:31 P.M. AND RELAYED TO CONCERNED US NAVAL AUTHORITIES.

2. MEANWHILE, A DEA PILOT STATIONED AT EL PASO FLEW IN A DEA HELICOPTER ACROSS THE BORDER AT APPROXIMATELY 5:45 P.M., LOCATED THE WRECKAGE, LANDED AND DETERMINED THAT THE PILOT HAD BEEN KILLED.

3. THE MEXICAN FEDERAL DISTRICT ATTORNEY FOR CHIHUAHUA, ON HEARING OF THE CRASH, WENT IMMEDIATELY TO THE SCENE(A RELATIVELY INACCESSIBLE AREA) AND CONFIRMED THAT THE PILOT HAD BEEN KILLED AND ORDERED A PLATOON OF SOLDIERS PLACED AROUND THE WRECKAGE AREA TO PREVENT ENTRY OF UN-AUTHORIZED PERSONS AND TO PRECLUDE DISTURBANCE OF EVIDENCE PENDING INVESTIGATION BY GOM AND US AUTHORITIES. CONGEN SHAPIRO AND HIS STAFF ALSO BECAME IMMEDIATELY IN-
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VOLVED AND PROVIDED HELPFUL COORDINATION BETWEEN GOM AND

US AUTHORITIES IN THE EL PASO/CIUDAD JUAREZ AREA.

4. SOURCES AT THE SCENE ARE ON STANDBY TO ASSIST WITH REMOVAL OF REMAINS AND WRECKAGE BUT ARE AWAITING CLEARANCE FROM US NAVY INVESTIGATOR. PILOT'S REMAINS ARE STILL IN CRASH AREA AND GOM AUTHORITIES(NOTING MEXICO'S 24-HOUR BURIAL REQUIREMENT) ARE PRESSING CONGEN AND US MILITARY OFFICIALS FOR EARLY REMOVAL OF REMAINS AND AIRCRAFT WRECKAGE. NAVAL INVESTIGATOR IN CHARGE ON SCENE REPORTEDLY ELECTED TO REVIEW TAPES AIRPORT TOWER AND LOOK INTO RELATED ASPECTS FLIGHT PLANS BEFORE CHECKING CRASH SITE AND AUTHORIZING REMOVAL OF BODY. WE ASSUME INTERESTED OFFICIALS BOTH GOVERNMENTS CAN MAKE MEASURABLE INVESTIGATION PROGRESS IN NEXT FEW HOURS AND THAT ALL BASIC AND NECESSARY ACTIONS RELATING RECOVERY BODY AND SALVAGE WRECKAGE CAN BE CONCLUDED BEFORE END OF DAY.
CALDERHEAD

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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